



FEATHERED ASSASSINS

THE GOLDEN SPARROW

7

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Usaiko

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JUST
WHAT'S SO
UNUSUAL
ABOUT IT?

YOU COULD
FIND
THEM
ANYWHERE!

THAT MURDER
IS MADE OF
ORDINARY
MATERIALS. THE
CRAFTSMANSHIP
IS SIMPLE
AND CRUDE.



THAT'S
IT,
RIGHT?



YOU KNOW,
MY
GRANDFATHER
WAS PRETTY
FAMOUS,
TOO.

COULD IT
BE A CLUE
TO SOME
OTHER
TREASURE?

IS IT SOME
WAY OF
CONTACTING A
FAMOUS
BANDIT?





**THE MIRROR
ITSELF IS
CONVEX.**

THE MIRROR
HAS BEEN POLISHED
INTO A SLIGHT
OUTWARD CURVE,
RESULTING IN A
MAGNIFICATION
EFFECT THAT ENHANCES
DETAIL.



**THE
KNOB IS
OVERSIZED.**

THIS MAKES IT
DIFFICULT TO
GRASP. IT MUST
BE CLASPED
BETWEEN TWO
FINGERS



**AN INCH
AND A HALF IN
DIAMETER,
WEIGHING
TWO TAYL
THREE HACE.**

ITS SMALL
SIZE MAKES IT
EASY TO CARRY
ON ONE'S
PERSON



**DUE TO ITS
SHAPE, IT IS
KNOWN AS THE
POO-SHAPED
MIRROR**

THIS
MIRROR IS
USED FOR
IMPROMPTU
UTILIZATION OF
THE EMPEROR'S
SHAPE-SHIFTING
TECHNIQUE!





IT ALLOWS THE USER TO COMPLETELY TRANSFORM THEIR FEATURES, BONE STRUCTURE, EVEN THEIR VOICE. THE TARGET'S OWN FAMILY WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE. IT IS THE ULTIMATE TECHNIQUE OF THE YELLOW EMPEROR OF EDOOY.

IT IS ONE OF THE FOUR GREAT MAGICAL TECHNIQUES.



NATURALLY, THERE ARE MANY THINGS THE COMMON PEOPLE ARE NOT AWARE OF.



SHAPE-SHIFTING TECHNIQUE?



THE YELLOW EMPEROR'S FAMILY WAS DECIMATED 120 YEARS AGO. THE TECHNIQUE AND THIS MIRROR DISAPPEARED WITH THEM.



"SIGH" SO HE'S STILL JUST A MIRROR-MAKER THEN.

HOW DISAPPOINTING...



DOES THAT MEAN

MY GRANDFATHER MADE THIS MIRROR SPECIFICALLY FOR THE YELLOW EMPEROR?



...I COULDN'T BEAR IT.

SEEING THIS ARTIFACT THAT WAS ONCE THE OBJECT OF EVERY MAN'S DESIRE REDUCED TO A MERE VENDOR'S BAUBLE...



**YOU ARE A
DESCENDANT
OF THE
YELLOW
EMPEROR!**



AN ORPHAN
ADOPTED BY
THE SIXTH
GENERATION
LORD OF THE
HUANG
IMPERIAL
MANOR.

HUANG YAN,
THE SEVENTH
SON OF THE
SEVENTH
GENERATION OF
THE YELLOW
EMPEROR.



AFTERWARDS, THE LORD OF
THE MANOR ARRANGED FOR
HIM TO MARRY A DEAF AND
BLIND GIRL OF THE HUANG
IMPERIAL FAMILY.
THEY OPENED A MIRROR
WORKSHOP IN EZHOU.



HE WAS
BOOKISH AND
FRILE, WITH A
DISTASTE FOR
COMBAT. HIS
ONLY PLEASURE
WAS STUDYING
THE ARCAINE
ARTS.



THIS WAS
THE
BIRTHPLACE
OF THE
POD-SHAPED
MIRROR.



IT SEEMS
TO BE THE
CASE THAT HE
BROUGHT
THEM ALL TO
HIDE IN
CHANG'AN.

AFTER THE
DISASTER AT THE
MANOR, NOBODY
KNOWS WHAT
HAPPENED
TO THE
DESCENDANTS
OF THE YELLOW
EMPEROR.





AS THE
MANTIS STALKS
THE CEMETARY
BUILDING THEM
WILL LOSE THE
GOLDEN
SPARRER!

I SHALL
NOT REST
UNTIL YAN PO
APPEARS.

THE
YELLOW
EMPEROR'S
FAMILY WILL
HAVE OUR
REVENGE!

SMASH!











WHEN WE
NEEDED SOME,
OUR WORKSHOP
WOULD BUY SOME
CINNABAR

AND SMELT
IT INTO
MERCURY.



THERE'S A
TYPE OF
POWDER USED IN
POLISHING
MIRRORS CALLED
BLACK TIN. IT HAS
MERCURY IN IT.

OF
COURSE.



PERHAPS
SHE COULD
BE OF
SOME USE.



AND
BRING THEM
HERE
TOMORROW.

PREPARE A
LIST OF THE
MOST
INFLUENTIAL
CINNABAR
SELLERS IN
CHANG'AN

IF YOU
REALLY
WANT TO
HELP.



**CALL ME
HUANG
CHU...**



**I'M NOT THE
GOLDEN
SPARROW,
AND I'M NO
WARRIOR.**

**I'M JUST
ANOTHER
DESCENDANT OF
THE YELLOW
EMPEROR.**



**CINNABAR
MERCHANTS?
HM...**

**I'LL DO
MY BEST!**

**DON'T
WORRY,
GOLDEN
SPARROW.**



**I DIDN'T CATCH
THE GOLDEN
SPARROW, BUT
I DID CATCH
ANOTHER YELLOW
EMPEROR
DESCENDANT.**

**TRULY AN
UNFORESEEN
BOUNTY!**



**THE
CINNABAR
TRADE IN
CHANG'AN IS
CONCENTRATED
AMONG THREE
MARKETS.**

**THE NEXT
DAY.
NIGHTFALL.**



**FINALLY THERE'S
THE COMMERCIAL
TRADE MARKET IN
THE WESTERN
REIGIONS, WITH
LONGSTANDING
MARITIME
TRADING
ACTIVITY.**



**THE LUD
MERCHANT HOUSE
IN THE WEST, THE ZI
TRADING COMPANY,
AND MORE THAN 50
OTHER OUTFITS MAKE
UP THE INDUSTRIAL
MARKET.**

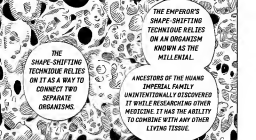


**THE MEDICINAL
MARKET. THERE
YOU HAVE THE BRAND
MERCHANT HOUSE ON
THE EAST SIDE OF
TOWN AND CLOSE
TO THIRTY OTHER
MERCHANTS ON THE
WEST SIDE.**



**THIS IS THE
DETAILED LIST. I
WROTE DOWN
EVERY SELLER I
COULD FIND.**





THE
SHAPE-SHIFTING
TECHNIQUE RELIES
ON IT AS A WAY TO
CONNECT TWO
SEPARATE
ORGANISMS.

THE EMPEROR'S
SHAPE-SHIFTING
TECHNIQUE RELIES
ON AN ORGANISM
KNOWN AS THE
MILLENNIAL.

ANCESTORS OF THE HUANG
IMPERIAL FAMILY
UNINTENTIONALLY DISCOVERED
IT WHILE RESEARCHING OTHER
MEDICINE. IT HAS THE ABILITY
TO COMBINE WITH ANY OTHER
LIVING TISSUE.



THE MILLENNIAL LOSES
CONTROL OVER TIME. THE
SKIN OF THE COMBINED
ORGANISM WILL BREAK
OUT IN POCKMARKS.
PAINFUL ULCERS SWARM
THE WHOLE BODY.

ALTHOUGH
THE
EFFECT IS
MIRACULOUS,
THE PRICE IS
DISASTROUS.

MERCURY

SO THE
USER MUST
SUPPRESS THE
MILLENNIAL
WITH
MEDICINE.



**IF WE
CAN FIND
THE
MERCURY,
WE CAN
FIND HER.**

**IF YAM FU
STOLE THE SECRETS
OF THE
SHAPE-SHIFTING
TECHNIQUE,
SHE'LL NEED A
SUPPLY OF
MERCURY FOR THE
REST OF HER
LIFE.**



**BUT THERE ARE
SO MANY PEOPLE
IN CHANG'AN
THAT USE
MERCURY. HOW-**



**THIS IS
TRUE WITH
THE
MILLENNIAL
AS WELL.**

**IF A CERTAIN
MEDICINE IS USED
FOR TOO LONG,
THE DISEASE IT'S
MEANT TO COMBAT
WILL DEVELOP A
RESISTANCE
TO IT.**



**BUT SHE
REQUIRES A
TERRIFYING
AMOUNT.**

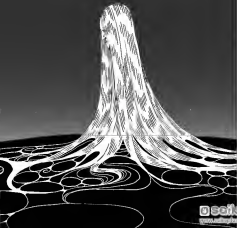
**FOR MOST
PEOPLE,
ONLY A FEW
DROPS OF
MERCURY
WOULD
SUFFICE.**



**DON'T
FORGET.**

**SHE'S
BEEN
USING IT
FOR 120
YEARS!**

***SHE MUST BATHE
IN A POOL OF
MERCURY!***





SO I
MOVED
ON TO
INVESTIGA
TE OTHER
LEADS.

I ONLY
RETURNED TO
CHANG'AN WHEN
THE GOLDEN
SPARROW
APPEARED
SEVERAL
MONTHS AGO.

I DISCOVERED
THIS CINNABAR
DISCREPANCY
AGES AGO, BUT
I HAVEN'T BEEN
ABLE TO FIND A
TRACE OF
WHERE IT
WENT.

BUT IT'S
IMPOSSIBLE
TO
INVESTIGATE
ANY
FURTHER.

I SEE. SO SHE
NEEDS THOSE
1,000 PICULS OF
CINNABAR TO
BREW A
MERCURY BATH!

IF WE CAN
FIND WHERE
THAT
CINNABAR
WENT, WE'LL
BE ABLE TO
SHUFF OUT YAN
PO.



"SIGH"

I HAD THOUGHT
YOU MIGHT
KNOW OF SOME
BLACK MARKET
CINNABAR
MERCHANTS...



THERE IS
ONE PLACE I
DIDN'T
WRITE
DOWN



BECAUSE
THAT
PLACE
IS...

IT'S NOT
THAT I
WANTED TO
LEAVE IT OUT,
BUT I JUST
COULDN'T
INCLUDE IT.

**DAMING
PALACE!**



WHAT?



AND
CINNABAR IS
AN ESSENTIAL
INGREDIENT TO
CONDUCT THESE
PILLS.



THE EMPEROR
HAS A CABAL OF
EVIL PRIESTS
THERE,
SACRIFICING
VIRGIN BOYS AND
GIRLS IN AN
ATTEMPT TO MAKE
PILLS OF
IMMORTALITY

ROUND AROUND
THE CITY IS THAT
THERE IS A
SECRET DANGEROUS
DAOIST TEMPLE
HIDDEN WITHIN
DAMING PALACE.



IF THEY'RE DOING THIS IN
SECRET, THAT MEANS
THEY'LL ALSO NEED TO BE
DIPLOMATIC ABOUT
WHILE THEY GET THEIR
INGREDIENTS FROM NO
WONDER I COULDN'T FIND
ANYTHING.





THIS IS
AN OPEN
SECRET IN
CHANG'AN'S
MERCHANT
CIRCLE.

THE
EUNUCH IN
CHARGE
PASSES
ALONG THESE
DUTIES
TO HIS
RELATIVES.

ALL OF
THE PALACE
SUPPLIES
ARE
COORDINATED
BY THE OFFICE
OF IMPERIAL
AFFAIRS.



IF THIS IS
TRUE THEN
WE'LL HAVE TO
ENTER THE
PALACE THAT
WON'T BE
EASY...

NOT
NECESSA-
RILY!



I
SEE.



HE HAS A
PRIVATE
RESIDENCE
ON
LONGZHEN
LANE.

THE
CURRENT
MINISTER
OF IMPERIAL
AFFAIRS IS
EUNUCH YU.



LET'S BEGIN
OUR
INVESTIGATION
THERE!



LONGZHENG
LANE
EUNUCH
YU'S
PRIVATE
RESIDENCE



LIGHT SOME
SOOTHING
INCENSE AND
DRINK ONE
BOWL. YOU'LL
BE FINE.

NO
MATTER.



EUNUCH
YU'S
WIFE, YU
SHIJI.

I'VE BEEN
FEELING SO HOT
TODAY SO I HAD
A FEW MORE
CUPS, AND THEN
MY STOMACH
STARTED
ACTING UP.

YOU
CAME AT
THE
RIGHT
TIME.



THE
IMPERIAL
PHYSICIAN
HAS
ARRIVED.





I
SMELL
SULFUR!



A SECRET
PASSAGE!

OR A
TRAP?



ONLY
SULFUR
CAN
NEUTRALIZE
THIS
TOXICITY!

MERCURY IS
SLIGHTLY
TOXIC, BUT IT
CAN BE DEADLY
IN LARGE
AMOUNTS.



I'M
WILLING
TO BET.
ONWARD!



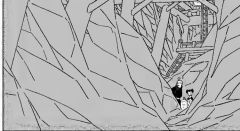
COULD
IT BE...
THE MERCURY
POOL IS
BELOW US?



SO THE
MERCURY IS
USED TO
TREAT THE
DRAPE-SHIFT
ING SIDE
EFFECTS.

AND THE
SULFUR'S USED
TO OFFSET THE
TOXICITY
OF THE
MERCURY.

I
SEE.



THANKFULLY
IT'S ONLY A
SINGLE
CORRIDOR OR
WE'D
DEFINITELY
GET LOST.



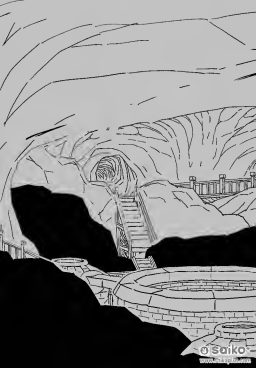
WE'VE
ALREADY
USED UP ONE
CANDLE
DOWN
HERE.

WHAT
A LONG
TUNNEL.









o Saiko

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**IT'S ALL
LIKE YOU
SAID!**

**THE
MERCURY
POOL!**

**CON-
MIDAY
DISTIL-
LATION
JARS.**



**I, THE
UNFIDEL 14TH
GENERATION
DESCENDANT OF
THE YELLOW
EMPEROR,
HOARD CHU**

**BY THE
SPIRITS
OF MY
ANCESTORS.**



SOS

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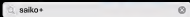


**HAVE
FINALLY
FOUND A
TRACE OF
YAN PO!**

To be continued

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